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Alumni Focus – Lori and DeWayne Grice

March 11, 2011

It is evident after meeting this husband and wife duo that giving back plays an important part in their lives. The couple strives to live according to the “Rick Warren concept” of living on 10% and giving away 90%. But had it not been for one photograph, the Grice’s may not have been able to play such a vital role in their community.

Since the age of eight Lori has had a camera in her hand when her Uncle entered the photography business and later founded Regency Photo. When she was 18 years old she had the opportunity to attend her first Georgia Southern football game. Working her way through college in her uncle’s photo lab, it was a rare occasion when she got a Saturday off to go watch the Eagles. Given that opportunity, she was sure to take her camera with her. She snapped many shots but one in particular of a Georgia Southern Eagle running the ball, with his teammates cheering him on in the background, for a touchdown. The owner of Archibald’s, which is now Gnat’s Landing, saw the photo and asked Lori for a print for his restaurant where the famed Erk Russell frequented. Coach Russell fell in love with the portrait and requested that the action shot be used in Georgia Southern’s marketing campaigns. Erk’s endorsement of Lori’s work gave her the boost she needed to launch her highly successful photography business.

“My aunt actually said after that ‘it’s such a shame that you have reached your peak at 18,’” laughed Lori.

DeWayne started off as a co-op student at Georgia Southern where he later graduated with a BBA in entrepreneurship. While in college, he co-founded Cable Ad Concepts, a consulting agency for Northland Cable. In this role DeWayne helped establish the advertising, production and news divisions in Northland Cable systems throughout the southeast. While managing Cable Ad Concepts, then Georgia Secretary of State Lewis Massey convinced DeWayne to come to Atlanta and help lead his gubernatorial campaign. In 1997 DeWayne founded Z to A Solutions, a nonprofit and political fundraising company. DeWayne’s company made a tremendous impact in the political and nonprofit arena by raising more \$20 million in the short time he presided over the company. But this fast paced life wasn’t quite right for the couple who wanted to start a family.

John C. Maxwell, a successful leadership development author and motivational speaker, spoke to Lori and DeWayne while they were trying to figure out their path and said to Lori, “you have no idea how lucky you are and how wonderful it is to know what your gift is.” He also challenged DeWayne to find his gift, and DeWayne knew that leading political campaigns just weren’t his primary gift. So, DeWayne merged his company and returned to Statesboro full time to join Lori in her photography studio downtown.

Photography is more than just a portrait session and portrait sales for DeWayne and Lori, they pride themselves on their work and their community involvement.

“It doesn’t matter who we photograph, we have made it our goal to be proud to display our prints in any home across America,” said DeWayne.

In 2002, just 14 months after the birth of their daughter Edie Grace, Lori was offered the opportunity to travel to France and train with other professional photographers on a Thursday, on Friday she was chosen for Georgia Trend Magazine's 40 under 40 and the following Monday she was diagnosed with Cervical Cancer. After being diagnosed, while holding her baby in her arms, Lori realized that if she couldn't beat the cancer the only memories Edie Grace would have of her mother would be captured in portraits. Lori was reaffirmed of the power and importance of her job as a family's portrait artist. The cancer was caught early enough that Lori did not have to undergo Chemo-therapy. After several surgeries and treatments, Lori is living cancer free. But she looks at life and photography in a new way.

"The greatest gift of the cancer, I realize, is that every day that I go into the studio I create the images and memories that may be someone's last. So no matter how I feel that day I have to give my A-game." says Lori.

On top of their commitment to quality, the couple is dedicated to building their community. Lori and DeWayne played a fundamental role in rebuilding Downtown Statesboro. As President of the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority, she played an integral role in the redevelopment of several downtown buildings that were in ill repair including what is now City Hall. DeWayne was appointed by Statesboro professionals and then Mayor Hal Averitt to restore an old bank and movie theater into the successful Averitt Center for the Arts. DeWayne was a charter member on Georgia Southern's Board for the Center for Continuing Education. DeWayne led the effort to restructure the largest nonprofit organization in the world, the American Heart Association, by streamlining the organization and creating just 12 regional offices instead of 51. DeWayne served as Chairman of the Southeastern Affiliate of AHA and as a national board member. Lori is an activist and national spokesperson for the HPV vaccination and early diagnosis and treatment of cervical cancer. They were the first husband and wife team to be listed in Georgia Trend Magazine's 40 under 40 and have both received gubernatorial appointments. Lori has been named Georgia Photographer of the Year in 2007 and twice named International Photographer of the Year. She is 1 of 2,000 photographers nationally certified out of the Professional Photography Associations 20,000 members. Lori was only the 14th photographer in Georgia to be inducted into the prestigious American Society of Photographers. In 2008, Lori was chosen to create an ornament for official White House Christmas Tree by First Lady Laura Bush, after being nominated by Congressman John Barrow. Lori was the only photographer to be chosen. Currently, Lori and DeWayne are integrally involved in founding the Hearts and Hands Health Clinic in Statesboro. DeWayne serves as the President of the clinics' Board of Directors and they are committed to raising awareness and funds for the clinic, which offers free health care to those in the community, who have lost or cannot afford health insurance.

For more information about the husband and wife team or to schedule a Portrait Session please visit their website: www.lorigrice.com